



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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05 January 2006

**UZB100738.E**

Uzbekistan: The status of the Birlik party and the treatment of its members (2003 - 2005)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Two human rights sources noted that despite the efforts of the Birlik party to register for the 2004 parliamentary elections, the party failed to receive official registration and thus could not participate in December's parliamentary polls (Freedom House 2005; AI 2005). Freedom House's *Nations in Transit* report stated that

[t]he authority of the Uzbek government is not based on universal and equal suffrage. ... Opposition parties are denied registration by the government and have not been allowed to participate in elections since the first postindependence presidential ballot in 1991. Most prominent opposition leaders have been in exile for the last 10 years. The signs of a slight political opening in 2003 - when opposition parties Erk (Freedom) Democratic Party and Birlik (Unity) Movement were allowed to hold their assemblies, which had been banned for 10 years - did not evolve into genuine democratic progress (ibid. 2005).

According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004*, Uzbek authorities "harassed and sometimes arbitrarily detained members of the opposition Birlik" (ibid. 28 Feb. 2005 Sec. 1.d.).

The following is a chronological non-exhaustive list of the treatment of some Birlik members by Uzbek officials:

- On Tuesday June 7 [2005], Andijan police detained Hamdam Sulaimonov, deputy chairman of the Fergana Valley branch of the opposition party Birlik ("Unity"). After searching Sulaimonov's home, police seized his computer. He was interrogated about the distribution of a statement about the Andijan events by Birlik party chairman Abdurakhim Polat during a U.S. Helsinki Commission briefing on Uzbekistan in Washington on 19 May [2004] (HRW 9 June 2005).
- On June 2 [2005], Andijan police also arrested Nurmukhammad Azizov and Akbar Oripov of the Andijan branch of Birlik. During searches of the men's homes, police confiscated human rights publications and computers containing a copy of the Birlik statement about the events in Andijan. Azizov and Oripov remain in custody (ibid.).
- On May 28 [2005], Samarkand police arrested Kholiqnazar Ganiyev, head of the Samarkand province offices of both Ezgulik and the Birlik, on charges of "hooliganism" and sentenced him to 15 days of administrative arrest. A group of women, apparently government provocateurs, attacked Ganiyev's house and then brought charges against him when he asked them to leave (ibid.).
- On May 15 [2004], police in Namangan arrested Birlik activist Mukhammadali Koraboyev following an altercation with a mahalla committee chairman. Police released him on July 17; he was subsequently sentenced to 3 years' probation (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005 Sec. 1.d.).
- On March 1 [2004], police in Jizzak Province initiated legal proceedings to have Mamarizo Nazarov, a human rights activist and delegate to the opposition Birlik Party's National Committee, declared mentally incompetent. Local authorities dropped their efforts at the behest of provincial officials (ibid. Sec. 1.c.).
- On February 16 [2004], police in Jizzak arrested human rights activist and Birlik Party organizer Muidjahon Kurbanov on charges of weapons and narcotics possession. Local observers speculated that authorities targeted Kurbanov because of his efforts to advocate on behalf of local farmers. Police claimed that they found a hunting rifle, several bullets, and a small quantity of opiate derivative in Kurbanov's chicken shed. During his trial, Kurbanov's defense team established that the gun and ammunition were of different calibers and that Kurbanov's shed had likely been broken into shortly before the police search, while police and local authorities gave inconsistent testimony. Most observers concluded that the evidence against Kurbanov had likely been planted.

On March 24, Kurbanov was sentenced to 31/2 years in prison; however, this was reduced to a fine on appeal (ibid. Sec. 1.d.)

According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004*, the government of Uzbekistan regularly blocks access to the Birlik's Website (ibid. Sec. 2.a.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

Amnesty International (AI) 2005. "Uzbekistan." *Amnesty International Report 2004*.  
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#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Internet sites, included:** British Helsinki Human Rights Group, Central Intelligence Agency, Euroasianet.org, Factiva, Human Rights Internet, International Crisis Group, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation for Human Rights, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, International Press Institute, IRIN News, NATO, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Radio Free Europa, UK House of Commons - Foreign Affairs Committee, UN Committee Against Torture.

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